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ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE DEAN RUSK,
SECRETARY OF STATE,
BEFORE A LUNCHEON OF
THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION,
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ROOM, DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
WASHINGTON, D. C., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 1965,
1:45 P.M., E.D.T.

Ladies and gentlemen: It is a very great pleasure for me to be here. It is a privilege for me to salute my colleagues, present and retired, of the Foreign Service and to express to you the gratitude of President Johnson and of the American people for a service which is marked by so much competence, dedication and personal commitment.

Two and a half months ago President Johnson spoke to the world about Viet-Nam at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Today I wish to talk to you on the same subject -- to you who know that such problems have deep roots, to you who have lived through and worked upon such problems before, and to you who know that such matters can gravely affect the future of our nation and the prospects for general peace.

The struggle in Viet-Nam has continued since April and indeed has grown the more severe. The harsh resistance of the Communists to any form of discussions or negotiation continues. The effort to destroy the freedom of Viet-Nam has been expanded. The trial by fire of the people of Viet-Nam goes on. Their own resistance has been courageous but the need for American resolution and for American action has increased.

The root of the trouble in Viet-Nam is today just what it was in April and has been at least since 1960 -- a cruel and sustained attack by North Viet-Nam upon the people of South Viet-Nam. Now, as then, it is a brutal war -- marked by terror and sneak attack, and by the killing of women and children in the night. This campaign of terror has continued throughout the spring.

Those of

Those of us who have not served in Viet-Nam may find it hard to understand just how ugly this war of aggression has been. From 1961 to present date the South Vietnamese armed forces have lost some 25,000 dead and 51,000 wounded. In proportion to population, these South Vietnamese losses are ten times as great as those suffered by Americans in the Korean War, and larger than our losses in World War II. Even more terrible than these military losses are the cruelties of assassination and kidnapping among civilian officials and ordinary citizens. In the last eighteen months, for example, more than 2,000 local officials and civilians have been murdered. When an official is not found at home, often his wife and children are slain in his place. It is as if in our own country some 35,000 civic leaders or their families were to be killed at night by stealth and terror.

These are the methods of the Viet Cong. This is the test to which the people of Viet-Nam have gallantly responded.

Meanwhile, from the North, heavy infiltration has continued. Intelligence now shows that some 40,000 had come down before the end of 1964. Toward the end of that year -- well before the beginning of our own air operations against North Viet-Nam -- the infiltration of regular North Vietnamese Army units was begun, and important elements of that army are now known to be in place in South Viet-Nam and Laos, where they have no right to be.

And so we face a deliberate and long-matured decision by a persistent aggressor to raise the stakes of war. Apparently this was their answer to our own repeated affirmation that we ourselves did not wish a larger war. Apparently a totalitarian regime has once again misunderstood the desire of democratic peoples for peace and has made the mistake of thinking that they can have a larger war without risks to themselves. And hence the air strikes against military targets in North Viet-Nam.

These actions

These actions have made infiltration harder. They have increased the cost of aggression. Without them South Viet-Nam today would face still stronger forces from the North.

These measured air operations have done what we expected them to do -- neither more nor less. For air attack alone cannot bring peace. I cannot agree with those who think it wrong to hit the logistics of aggression. It is the aggression itself that is the wrong. Those who worry about bridges and barracks and ammunition dumps would do well to give their sympathy instead to the daily victims of terror in South Viet-Nam.

The other side is obviously not yet ready for peace. In these last months, the friends of peace in many lands have sought to move this dangerous matter to the conference table. But one proposal after another has been contemptuously rejected.

We and others, for example, have sought to clear a way for a conference on Laos, on Cambodia -- two neighboring countries where progress toward peace might be reflected in Viet-Nam itself. But these efforts have been blocked by North Viet-Nam and by Communist China.

Twice there has been an effort at discussions through the United Nations -- first in the Security Council after the August attacks in the Tonkin Gulf, and later this April, when Secretary General U Thant considered visits to Hanoi and Peiping to explore the possibilities of peace. But in August there was a refusal by Hanoi to come to the Security Council. And in April, both Hanoi and Peiping made it clear that they would not receive U Thant, and both regimes made plain their view that the United Nations is not competent to deal with that matter.

Repeatedly

Repeatedly our friends in Britain as a Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference have sought a path to settlement -- first by working toward a new conference in Geneva and then by a visit of a senior British statesman. But the effort for a conference in Geneva was blocked, and the distinguished British Traveller was told that he should stay away from Peiping and Hanoi.

Twice in April we made additional efforts of our own. In Baltimore the President offered unconditional discussions with the Governments concerned. Hanoi and Peiping call this offer a "hoax." At that time the 17 non-aligned nations had appealed for a peaceful solution, by negotiations without preconditions. This proposal was accepted on our side. It was rejected by Hanoi and by Peiping. And some of its authors were labelled "monsters and freaks."

The President of India made constructive proposals -- for an end of hostilities and an Afro-Asian patrol force. To us this proposal was full of interest and hope. But by Hanoi and Red China it was rejected as a betrayal.

Our own Government and the Government of South Viet-Nam, in May, suspended air attacks on North Viet-Nam. This action was made known to the other side to see if there would be a response in kind. This special effort for peace was denounced in Hanoi as "a worn-out trick," and denounced in Peiping as a "swindle." To those who complain that that so-called "pause" was not long enough, I would simply report that the harsh reaction of the other side was fully known before the attacks were resumed. And I would also recall that we held our hand for more than four years while tens of thousands of armed men invaded the South and every attempt at peaceful settlement failed.

Reports in the first half of June have confirmed that all these violent rejections are in fact what they appear to be -- clear proof that what

that what is wanted today in Hanoi is a military victory, not peace, and that Hanoi is not even prepared for discussions unless it is accepted in advance that there will be a Communist dominated government in Saigon, and unless too -- so far as we can determine -- American forces are withdrawn in advance.

So this record is clear. And there is substance in Senator Fulbright's conclusion that it seems clear that the Communist powers still hope to achieve a complete victory in South Viet-Nam and for this reason are at present uninterested in negotiations for a peaceful settlement. For the simple truth is that there is no lack of diplomatic procedures, machinery or process by which a desire for peace can be registered; that there is no procedural miracle through which peace can be obtained if one side is determined to continue the war.

As I have said, Hanoi is presently adamant against negotiation or any avenue to peace. Peiping is even more so, and one can plainly read the declared doctrine and purpose of the Chinese Communists. They are looking beyond the current conflict to the hope of domination in all of Southeast Asia -- and indeed beyond.

But one finds it harder to understand Hanoi's aversion to discussion. More immediately than the Chinese, the North Vietnamese face the costs and dangers of conflict. They too must fear the ambitions of Communist China in Southeast Asia. Yet they are still on the path of violence, insisting upon the forceful communization of South Viet-Nam and refusing to let their brothers in the South work out their own destiny in peace.

In recent weeks, after two months of reduced activity, the enemy has sharply quickened the tempo of his military action in the South. Since early May, major Viet Cong units have returned to the battlefield, and already a series of sharp engagements has shown us that the fighting through the summer may be hard. Setbacks have occurred, and serious defeats have been avoided only by the combination of continuing Vietnamese bravery and effective air and other types of support.

Losses

Losses on both sides have been heavy. From April first to date, we have had confirmed reports of almost 5,000 Viet Cong dead, almost 3,000 South Vietnamese, and almost 100 Americans. We must expect these losses to continue -- and our own losses may increase.

Since March we have deployed nine battalions of fighting men to South Viet-Nam. Six more are on their way. For as the President said in April, "We will not be defeated and we will not grow tired." "We will do everything necessary. . .and we will do only what is necessary."

Our own battalions in South Viet-Nam have three related tasks. Their first assignment was and is to guard such major installations as the airfield at Danang. A second and closely related task is that of active patrol in nearby areas. And the third is to join in combat support of Vietnamese forces -- when such help is requested and when our Commander, General Westmoreland, believes it should be given.

American forces so committed will carry with them the determined support of our people. These men know, as all our people know, that what they do is done for freedom and peace, in Viet-Nam, in other continents, and here at home.

In authorizing combat missions for our ground forces in Viet-Nam, the President acted to meet his constitutional responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief. He has recognized the obligations of this nation under the Southeast Asia Treaty, which the Senate approved by a vote of 82-1. He has acted under the Joint Resolution of August, 1964, which passed the Senate by a vote of 88-2 -- and passed the House with no opposing vote. This Resolution expresses our national readiness -- as the President determines -- "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack on the United States" and "all necessary steps, including the use of armed force" to help Viet-Nam and Southeast Asian members of the SEATO who ask for help to preserve their freedom.

The President

The President has acted on the unanimous advice of the American leaders in Saigon and his senior civil and military advisers in Washington.

He has acted in full consultation with the Government of South Viet-Nam.

And he has acted on his own considered judgment of what is necessary at this time to stop aggression.

This decision -- like all of our decisions in Viet-Nam -- is open to review by members of the Congress, and open to reversal if it does not have their support.

But the leaders of the Congress have been kept in close touch with the situation, and no such prospect should stimulate the hopes of enemies or the fears of friends. For America is not divided in her determination nor weak in her will.

In Viet-Nam today we face one more challenge in the long line of dangers we have, unhappily, had to meet and master for a generation. We have had to show both strength and restraint -- courage and coolness -- for Iran and for Greece, for Berlin and for Korea, in the Formosa Strait, and in the Cuban missile crisis. We mean to show the same determination and coolness now. In 1954 President Eisenhower pledged our support to the Government of Viet-Nam, to assist that government, as he put it, "in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means." And this determination was reaffirmed again and again by President Kennedy. "We are going to stay here", he said. "We are not going to withdraw from that effort." And that is our position still.

Now, as in April, as the President put it, "We will use our power with restraint and with all the wisdom we can command." For it is others, and not we, who have increased the scale of fighting. It is

others,

others, and not we, who have made threats of gravely widened conflict. The firmness with which we resist aggression is matched by the firmness with which we will refrain from ill-advised adventure. A few -- a very few -- may believe that unlimited war can take the place of the sustained and steady effort in which we are engaged -- just as there may be a few -- a very few -- who think we should pull out and leave a friendly people to their fate. But the American people want neither rashness nor surrender. They want firmness and restraint. They expect courage and care. They threaten no one. And they are not moved by the threats by others.

This contest centers in the defense of freedom for the people who live in South Viet-Nam. The sustained and increasing infiltration from North Viet-Nam has required the measured use of air attack on military targets in the North. We alone cannot determine the future -- could we do so there would be a prompt peace. The other side, too, must decide about the future. And we must hope they know -- as we do -- that increased aggression would be costly far beyond the worth to the aggressor.

The political turmoil in South Viet-Nam has continued. It is easy to be impatient with our friends in Saigon as they struggle to establish and sustain a stable government under the stress of war. We see there the ferment of a society still learning to be free, even while under attack from beyond their borders.

We must remember that this ancient people is young in its independence, restless in its hopes, divided in its religions, and varied in its regions. The turmoil of Viet-Nam needs the steadfastness of America. Our friends in Viet-Nam know -- and we know -- that our people and our troops must work and fight together. Neither of us can do the work of the other. And the main responsibility must always be with, and is fully accepted by, the South Vietnamese. Yet neither of us can "go it alone". We would not be there without the urgent request for assistance from those whose land

this happens to be. We have a tested faith in the enduring bravery of the people of Viet-Nam, and they, in turn, can count on us with equal certainty.

The people of Viet-Nam long for peace. And the way to peace is clear. Yesterday, the Foreign Minister of South Viet-Nam set forth the fundamental principles that can provide a "just and enduring peace". Those principles, in summary, are:

- An end to aggression and subversion.
- Freedom for South Viet-Nam to choose and shape for itself its own destiny "in conformity with democratic principles and without any foreign interference from whatever sources."
- As soon as aggression has ceased, the ending of the military measures now necessary by the Government of South Viet-Nam and the nations that have come to its aid to defend South Viet-Nam; and the removal of foreign military forces from South Viet-Nam.
- And effective guarantees for the independence and freedom for the people of South Viet-Nam.

Now these are the fundamental steps. This is what the arguing and the fighting is all about. When they are carried out, we can look forward, as we have stated previously many times, to the day when relations between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam can be worked out by peaceful means. And this would include the question of a free decision by the peoples of North and South Viet-Nam on the matter of reunification.

This forthright and simple program meets the hopes of all, and attacks the interests of none. It would replace the threat of conquest by the hope of free and peaceful choice.

And even while these hopes of peace are blocked for now by aggression, we on our side and other nations have reaffirmed our deep commitment to the peaceful progress of Viet-Nam and Southeast Asia as a whole. In